

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
OBSERVER DATA IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) was provided with an update on the observer model by Dr. Jim Hastie of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center. After discussing the latest data and its use, the GAP has the following comments.

First, the GAP is seriously concerned that no additional analysis has been done to update the data used to make significant inseason changes at the April meeting. As the majority of the GAP noted at the time, the data used in April is out of date and does not reflect current fisheries management measures, leading to false assumptions that have adversely affected sport and commercial fishermen, processors, and coastal communities.

Second, because real-time data is not used, we will continue to be in a situation where prior-year data gives false results and will continue to lead to a downward spiral in allowable catch. This situation will worsen as less harvest leads to less data.

Third, the GAP again expresses its frustration that - to date - only trawl data is being used in spite of the fact that the observer program covers all sectors of the commercial fishing fleet.

Fourth, as the data sets become smaller due to less fishing, more extrapolation will be used to cover the entire coast. Concentrated fishing effort in smaller and smaller areas will be more and more expanded, again leading to false conclusions. Stratification continues to be entirely too broad, taking into account no changes in seasonality or fish migration.

Finally, the majority of the GAP continues to oppose the inseason use of observer data unless that data is real-time.

PFMC
06/16/03